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POEMS

BY

D. H. S. NICHOLSON

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POEMS BY D. H. S. NICHOLSON

POEMS

DANIEL HOWARD INCLAIR BY
D. H. S. NICHOLSON
188

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THE PRAYER-WALK

O COME with me to the prayer-walk
Where the tamarisk spray is blown,
Where ever the sharp sea-grasses talk
In a whispered undertone
Of things that the sea has known,
And the terrible sounds they hear.

That I show you the place of the secret mere
Hemmed round by the tamarisk hedge,
Through the veils of the mist that shift and clear
From the water's mournful edge,
And the channels choked with sedge,
And the horrible shapes that fight.

Where shadows pass on a silver night
As the tamarisk bushes sway,
And glide on the water gleaming bright
In a world grown far away ;
And thick weed odours stay
In the quivering haunted air.

Perilous forests of pine are there,
Where small gnomes peer and hide,
And uncouth patches of earth worn bare
By shapeless feet that glide,
And tortured branches tied
In the dark by fumbling hands.

There are nettles rank in poisonous bands,
And burdocks gross and thick,
Distorted growths of forgotten lands
Before earth's climacteric ;
And hidden memories prick
With a sudden sickening pain.

And the soul hears notes of an old refrain
Sung back in the depths of time,
Beneath the stretch of a dead inane,
Midst the hideous things of slime ;
Strange turns of formless rhyme
That shudder and break and end. . . .

(For no man knows what the gods may send,
Or the day when the word will come
That shall change the ways of his life, or lend
A voice to a soul born dumb.
And never man shall plumb
The depths of a sleeping past.)

So come with me where the shade is cast
By the tortured tamarisk plumes,
And strange unbidden thoughts crowd fast
From their unremembered tombs,
And stunted lichen blooms
Where the hand of time has passed.

ST. LAWRENCE.

THE MARCH OF THE TREES

AT the last it will surely come, to-day or in
many years,
The thing I have known from always, the
fertile mother of fears.
Mercy is not in nature, nor change of the great
Design,
And each man knows his horror, and the March
of the Trees is mine.

It will not be in the silence when the heavy trees
are white,
But the slumbrous after-stillness in the deep of a
summer night,
When the distant frogs are croaking and the mist
shapes dance on the pond
A slow and fearful measure, like wraiths of the
pale Beyond.

I think there will be a signal, some hint of a
whispered word
Stirring the forest silence, or the cry of a
stricken bird.
And the trees will be bowed together, and raise
their heads again,
While the sound of the trees rejoicing will be as
the sound of rain.

They will come up out of the valleys where they
have waited long,
And down from the quiet hills in a terrible
giant throng :
But I (it is written so in the Book of the Laws of
Fate)
Shall stay in the desolate clearing, and watch as
they come, and wait.

They will not come with a shouting, nor singing
the forest song,
But clothed with the deeper silence that broods
on an ancient wrong.
And my body will pay, being crushed, though it
struggle and fight for breath ;
But the end of the March of the Trees will be
silence also, and death.

WISLEY.

MIST

MIST on the hills, all mist,
And never a hill-top kissed
With the fire of the hidden sun :
Mist in the leafy dells
And the open rolling fells,
And the work of the day is done.

Mist in the dripping wood,
Where the Pan-God lonely stood
With the smile of an evil grace :
Mist in the dusky lane,
All dark with the sudden pain
Of a crying, anguished face.

Mist on the moaning sea,
Where the waves toil hopelessly
And the land is a shadowed death :
Mist on the river's breast,
And every branch is dressed
In the gauze of its clinging breath.

Mist in the mind of man,
However he try to scan
The track of the coming years :
Is there mist in the mind of God,
And never a footstep trod
But is wet with a rain of tears ?

ST. LAWRENCE.

TO THE DANCING FAUN

THY sins are not heavy upon thee, O quivering son of the morn,
The joy of the gods is upon thee, the joy of the dance of the faun.

Art thou human or godlike or brutish? Wast thou born of the surge of the sea?
Was the grass in the dew of the morning, or the sunlight the mother of thee?

Thou art youth in the sun of his gladness, in the boundless extent of his might,
Untroubled, unshackled, unheeding, the child of the strength of the light.

Thou knowest the joy of the morning, the joy of the love of the sun
As he leaps from the couch of his loving, intent on the journey begun

Through the realms of the day of his glory—
the passing of sea and of land,
Light bringing and springing and scatt'ring, the gift of the gold of his hand.

The song of the water thou knowest—the sound
of the surge of the sea,
The thunderous foam of its breaking—the thrill
of the force that is free.

The fling of its freshness thou feelest—the sting
of the salt of the sea,
In the swing and the sway of its motion, the
springing and moving of thee.

Thou singest the song of the creatures, the lilt
of the love of the light,
Upstretching thyself to the giver, outstretching
thine arms to the fight

Of the mortal immortal becoming, undying with
youth and with grace
And the fullness of life that is in thee, the
prowess and pride of the pace

Of the dance that thou dancest, unheeding, O
terrible child of the sun
When he ravished the sea in her sleeping, O boy
of the bride that he won.

Who telleth the tale of thy troubles — who
counteth the cost of thy cares
That thou carelessly flingest behind thee? Who
sifteth the wheat from the tares

In the glorious life that thou livest, O splendid
and pagan and strong,
Who takest the treasure thou findest, nor knowest
of right or of wrong?

Thy sins are not heavy upon thee—thou leapest
too high for regrets ;
Thou art Life, thou art Strength, thou art Beauty,
for thou knowest the joy that forgets.

CAPRI.

LUNATIC

O HEARTLESS moon, O passion-spent, O
moon the murderess,
Thy ancient pains show vivid stains, O cold
adulteress.

Black shadows flit across thy face, like evil birds
of sin,
Thou mock'st thy name with veilless shame, O
virgin Messaline.

Thy youth had many paramours, cold heart and
burning hand,
And led in trance and mazy dance and weary
saraband

White worshippers impassionate with mad virility
In loveless fields where passion yields a dumb
sterility.

For thou hast wantoned everywhere, dim bergs
of moveless ice
Have known the grace of thy cold embrace—the
hornèd cockatrice

Has fled the ban of thy shadowing, where
 blackened temples feel
The painted bliss of thy harlot's kiss, O royal
 Jezebel.

Now thou hast sent the reeling sun to the
 haunted caves of night,
And sucked his power in the twilight hour, a
 blinded Nazarite.

And thou serenely blazonest thy countless villanies
As thou ridest high in a bloodless sky, O queen
 of tyrannies.

But now thou mated art with death—wails high
 the blind banshee :
Thy silver blood in a poison-flood sickens the
 heaving sea.

CAPRI.

THE SONG OF THE SEA

(otherwise known as)

THE TRIUMPH OF THE RAVENING BEAST

I ROCK with a peace sublime
The sun to sleep on my breast :
I mock mankind with my sister Time
With the lure of rest.

With a myriad living wreathes
The fruits of my heaving womb
Enfringe the rocks where the water seethes
From the depths of gloom.

With crimson and gleaming gold
They sway in the purpurate edge,
White tipped, of my wave, as I bind and hold
Mankind with my pledge.

In emerald caves I glide,
Where never the living sun
Sends rays to lighten my whisp'ring tide
With the day begun.

In depthless echoing pools
Where endlessly water drips,
The ceaseless force of my kingdom rules,
And my motion slips.

I mutter in hidden holes
An earnest of rage in store ;
A leaden grumble of anger rolls
And swells to a sullen roar.

Then—Oh for the crashing foam,
The shout of the surging sea ;
And woe to man as the billows comb
In the roar of the wrath of me.

I thunder and scream and sing,
I writhe in a lust of blood,
I shake the earth till the mountains ring
With the blows of the shrieking flood.

I hurtle and storm and whirl
Blood mad with a thirst for life—
Engulf the stars with the waves I hurl
And shatter the world with strife.

Till I glut my soul with death,
Till I gorge my maw with flesh,
I clutch the throats as they fight for breath,
And I wreathe the limbs that thresh,

Till my hunger is satiate.
Then—sleep and a cloudy moon.
And I mock mankind with my sister Fate
With the snare of a dreamy swoon.

CAPRI.

LES-SAINTES-MARIES-DE-LA-MER

A DESOLATE lot has Saintes-Maries,
A lonely church by an inland sea,
A world abandoned utterly,
Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer.

Church and fortress together stand
Ghostly guard of a smitten land,
Throne of a country swathed in sand,
Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer.

The Saracens found a fateful shield
Where now the suppliant sick are healed,
But ever it stands in a barren field,
Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer.

Shapeless patches of water lie
Stagnant under a moveless sky,
Even the water seems to die—
Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer.

Large white birds on the marsh's grey,
Lonely souls that mourn alway,
Bitterly cry at the death of day,
Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer.

A desolate lot has Saintes-Maries,
A lonely church by an inland sea,
A world abandoned utterly,
Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer.

LES-SAINTE-MARIES.

TAPESTRY

LONG avenues of gold—broad duller streams
Of beaten silver hammered by the hand
Of some old studious craftsman, where the wind
Troubles the river's flow—a lithe black barge
Following the patient beasts—a sedgy pool
Holding the sun's farewell—then pyramids
And spires and towers of gold set quivering
In the opal mist—the melancholy scent
Of fallen leaves strewing the steamy earth.
Threading the colours of the tapestry
The long slim burning avenues of gold.

PARIS—LYON.

SUNSET AT ASSISI

THE sun goes down and the passing bell
Rings for a soul's release :
Warm amber and pale emerald :
Praise God for a soul at peace.

The sun goes down and the burning sky
Glows like a pyre of death :
Leap black flames on a sky of gold :
Praise God that He summoneth.

The sun goes down and the world is dead,
Clothèd in majesty :
Slowly shudders a mournful bell :
Praise God for His mystery.

The moon comes up in a silent world,
Dead with the dying sun :
Float dark clouds on a pearly sea :
Praise God for the night begun.

The stars come out in a purple sky,
Glitter like babies' eyes :
Lightly chatter the lesser bells :
Praise God that He doth devise.

The moon mounts up like a shining soul,
White with a perfect love :
Perfect peace of the silent bells :
Praise God for the rest above !

ASSIST.

SUNSET AT RAPALLO

FAR purple hills—a flaming sky—
Fire raging on the slow sea-flood.
A cold moon high,
A sailor's cry,
Land air and water drenched in blood.

MONTALLEGRO.

L'HEURE DU BERGER

PAUL VERLAINE

THE moon lies red upon the world's dim
edge ;

The shifting mist wreathes meadowlands in
smoke

And soothes them into sleep, a frog's hoarse
croak

Resounds and dies among the quivering sedge.

The lily-petals close—the waters sleep.

Far off the poplars show against the sky

Their rigid stems that cluster spectrally,

And fire-flies flicker where the woods are deep.

The screech-owls wake, and swoop in noiseless
flight

With heavy wings that beat the sable air.

All heaven is filled with cloudy stars that flare :

Venus shines silverly, and it is Night.

BOOKHAM.

CHANSON D'AUTOMNE

PAUL VERLAINE

THE full toned viol of autumn sobs
Its deep notes in my soul,
And in my stricken heart there throbs
A wistful monotone that robs
Life of its goal.

Lost days I may not live again,
And loves I fain would keep
In some shrine far and free from stain
Pass, and I watch them pale from pain,
With eyes that weep.

Tossed broken on an evil wind,
My life is frail for grief.
And I too pass and may not find
Sleep or repose for soul or mind,
Like some dead leaf.

BOOKHAM.

A CROSS-CONNECTION

“If, for instance, we could splice the outer extremity of our optic nerves to our ears, and that of our auditory nerves to our eyes, we should hear the lightning and see the thunder . . .”

W. JAMES, *Textbook of Psychology*.

INTO the hushèd symphony of night
Whose muted music of close-woven sound
Spreads like a curtain, threads the call of day.
Uncertain notes break through the film of sleep,
In the land of mist where dream and life are met,
And sound as with the faint shrill note of reeds
Played where some river bank is globed with dew.
Small bells of silver shake on smitten wires
Tight drawn across the sky's infinity,
With jangle of thin voices, and a thrill
As though clear water bubbled cool and low
On some pool's surface, shudders through the
world.

Then sudden leaps across the undertone
The clarion trumpet of the call of day.
The full toned peals ring out across the sea,
Far scattering night—the deeper organ sound
Rolls, of the brazen light's high triumphing.
I hear the beating music of the sun,
The throbbing of his full diapason,

Across the far dominion of Space.
I hear the unimaginable song
Of beams far flung, victorious—the might
Of his unceasing chant deafens my ears
Till, mingling with the pæan of his power
Steals in a softer music, as of flutes
Low played in dreamy woods at eventide.
The deep voiced drowsy murmur of the clouds
Muffles the organ blare, titanic bells
Of slow tongued bronze are beat, and very far
A hum as incense chanted litanies
Drones on the sense. Slower and softer pulse
The veins of air where throbs the bells' thick blood
Till there is almost silence, broken through
By th' infinite far tinkling of the stars,
As fairy anvils struck with tiny blows.
Then flows serenely through the waiting air
The cold pure stream of music of the moon.
All else is hushed, and, distantly and dim,
Begins the dreamy symphony of night.

.

I see the thunder. There, behind that cloud
He lurks like some immense ungainly beast,
Amorphous, black, with rugged spine of horn
Jagged like a mountain range . . . He changes
form,

Small rough-hewn towers stand in a wilderness
Of black wind-driven sand, then cluster close,
Heap frightfully together, totter, fall,
Scattering colossal fragments. Blindly crawl
These forms of hideous formlessness—again
Piles mass on fearful mass, looms huge, clear cut,
An obelisk which splits, rending itself
To many spears of stone that pierce the void
And, shattering, fall. A monstrous writhing
snake

Coils from the chaos, dark, big-bellied, gross,
And crushes form and formless in his folds.

That lightning deafens—like an engine scream
It cuts the brain—freezes the shuddering heart
Like some lithe serpent hiss—it whistles shrill
As the shrieking meteor burns the seething air.

And then the wind peers round the sheltering
rock,
A nebulous cloud form shot with livid flame,
Stained with harsh streaks of grey, and all its shape
Swollen and blotched with dull deformities.

I see it grip the thunder—see them shake,
Wrestling and struggling for the mastery,
These two gigantic horrors, and I hear
The long drawn howl and anguish of the flame.

CAPRI.

A LITANY TO THE GODDESS OF NIGHT

O VIRGIN pure, star-circleted,
Thy sable hair light-filleted,
Hear us, O Goddess
Grant us Thy peace.

O Thou, whose eyes are cold and clear,
Thy brow untroubled and austere,
Hear us, O Virgin
Grant us Thy peace.

O Goddess, whom the soft mist drapes
With strange fantastic shadow-shapes,
Hear us, O Goddess
Grant us Thy peace.

O Mother of the silent hours,
O gentle Lover of the flowers,
Hear us, O Virgin
Grant us Thy peace.

O spirit cool who dost renew
All things, O Giver of the dew,
Hear us, O Goddess
Grant us Thy peace.

O silver Goddess, who dost give
The shadow that lets all things live,
Hear us, O Virgin
Grant us Thy peace.

O Patroness of Love and Hate,
Thou silent Watcher over Fate,
O Virgin Queen immaculate,
Hear us as we supplicate,
Hear us, O Goddess,
White Virgin hear us,
Grant us Thy Peace.

RAPALLO.

SAN PIETRO MARTIRE

FRA ANGELICO

KEEP silent. It is better so. God knows
No words can give the bitterness of it,
And He alone can quench the fire He lit,
Not men and blood and agony and blows.

Nor yet can any tell the joy thereof :
The swift keen ecstasy of wounds that rain
On this my body which is His—Shall pain
Or dark blood clotting overcome His love ?

Yet, that a little way I may extend
The extreme limit of His glory, take
The book I wrote for joy of suffering's sake.
Keep silent, then, always, until the end.

BOOKHAM.

JEANNE D'ARC

“La piteuse femme lui demanda, requist et supplia humblement, ainsi qu’il estoit près d’elle en sa fin, qu’il allast en l’église prochaine et qu’il lui apportast la croix pour la tenir eslevée tout droit devant ses yeux jusques au pas de la mort, afin que la croix où Dieu pendist fut en sa vie continuellement devant sa vue.”

“IF there be gratitude within the world
Behind the canopy of smoke and flame,
To which my soul will fearfully be hurled,
Weighted with censure and with strong men’s
blame,

I pray that you may taste it. I have fought
And men have passed beyond all memory
For love of Him whose symbol you have brought,
The sign of death—the sign of victory.

I see it, though all else be overcast,
The key of mercy and the sword of grace !
Ah ! Jesu, Jesu, at the very last
I hear the voices and I see Thy face !”

BOOKHAM.

NOCTURNE

THERE is peace on the land,
The small stars stand
Dim points on the field of night :
The dark strange groves
Where the brown owl roves
Loom loft by the sheer cliff's white.

A gleaming way
From the silent bay
Lies wide on a waveless deep :
A silver spell
Ineffable
Brings all creation sleep.

ST. LAWRENCE.

“A LITTLE MORE . . .”

DEAR Heart, I think the sea must love
the land

With murmur of close kisses, even as we
Who blindly see its passion as we stand
Beyond its force, swayed by it utterly,
While all the thunders of its tumult find
The way to our deep souls—make throb the blood
Within us like the dark reverberate wind,
And scatter reason like the racing scud.

Who ploughs the foaming furrows of the sea ?
Who drives the snowy serpents of the waves,
That hiss with gaping jaws remorselessly
Against the moveless rocks ? Who, who enslaves
All mind, all body and all soul of us,
Drenches with loving, wreathes about with this
Tight rope of unity, this tenuous
Unbreaking bond—what force compels our kiss ?

Is it the same unknowledgeable power,
Part of the same unerring ceaseless scheme ?
Is Man too, at the striking of his hour,
Swayed by the elemental gods who seem

To hurl the sea white-foaming at the shore,
Dripping, insatiable, merciless,
Panting with lust of conquest? Is he more
Than this stern sea invincible, or less?

None reins the fury of the waves that roll
Livid with passion. Man has fought to gain
This conquest of his forces, to control
His soul's fierce elements, through ageless pain.
The wind moans fruitless on a weeping shore,
The sea storms vainly on a broken strand—
Dear Heart, by just this much I love you more
Than even the passionate sea can love the land.

ST. LAWRENCE.

WRECKAGE

THE world was black, strange figures moved
Across my sight to-day ;
Small arguments that blindly proved
Their truth made interplay,
Like dull worms crawling in my brain,
That crept and turned and crept again.

All sight was gone, all power to think
My own thoughts had been lost.
I was not—I had seemed to sink
Beneath a flood that tossed
My wreckage on a burning sea,
My scattered personality.

.
Then light returned—dull thoughts began
To thunder through my brain,
Like echoings that reeled and ran
Down pillared halls of pain,
Where Past with Present seemed to brood
And Present with the Future stood.

MILAN.

DEO GNOTO

O PASSIONATE god, have mercy on thy
slave !

A thousand deaths a thousand times I died
With thy grasp clutching at my throat—the
tide
Of life thou gavest sank, and wave on wave
Of fiercer fire rose, scorching—Thou didst lave
My inmost self with flame ; I seemed to ride
Red billows of most monstrous fire, flung wide
Across a terrible sea, toward a grave.

Unloose thy grip, and let my life find rest
In some cool garden where the setting sun
Brings shaded memories, and none molest
The peace I laboured many lives to win—
And yet . . . is rest gained when the fight is
done ?
Or wishing it the unforgiven sin ?

BOOKHAM.

THE HILL

I CLIMBED the hill of all the world's desire.
I saw the heights and all the deeps thereof,
The summit of it stained and rent with fire,
And all the slopes as meadowlands of love.

Cool meadowlands where little lovers played,
With wet deep grass and coronals of flowers ;
Broad paths and soft and avenued with shade
Where lives were dreams and centuries were
hours.

But all the top was ringed about with flame
That whoso battled through was scorched.
The ways
Were straitened, and the hours of them became
As centuries. But those therein gave praise.

BOOKHAM.

II

A PRAYER

COME back, come back, O Lover of my soul,
And thrill my life with music once again,
Even if pain
Need be, that your old ecstasy shall roll
And break the flood-gates of my impotence.
Let every sense
Ring to the riot of your hurricane.

Come back, O Lover of the murdered Christ
That lies within me, pallid and forlorn,
Let me be torn
By all the pangs of grief or joy unpriced,
If I may shake the fetters from my mind,
If I may find
The night of silence breaking into morn.

O memory of unforgotten ways,
Red roses of my passionate desire,
Clothe in your fire
The weight of these intolerable days,
Scorch up the dross of heaviness and death
And, with your breath,
Inspire this bodied dumbness, lest I tire.

ST. LAWRENCE.

A LITANY

LORD, in the hour of our distress
And moments of our weariness,
Look down.

When days are drear and nights are cold
With biting winds that tear and scold,
Look down.

When all our world is desolate
And all our love is turned to hate,
Look down.

When Fate has sought us out at last
And punishes for what is past,
Look down.

When new temptations daily rise
And we succumb with shameful eyes,
Look down.

When we are filled with numbing dread
Of cherished fancies cold and dead,
Look down.

Grant us the strength that will not fail,
Grant us the Light that will not pale,
O Lord of Death and Lord of Life,
To us whose lives are pale with strife
Send hope.

LONDON.

TWO VIEWS

I

CHRIST is risen ! Christ is risen ! Hear
the shrieking choir boys claim
While the Easter sun is burning like a molten
targe of flame.

Hail the Saviour—Hallelujah ! What is that to
me or you
While the meadow-green is shining through a
mesh of silver dew ?

Sins forgiven—Love triumphant ! What is that
to you or me
While the peewit's sharp lamenting echoes from a
silver sea ?

Satan vanquished—Hell is conquered ! Is it
nothing that the sheep
Fill the air with heavy bleating, waking from
their winter sleep ?

Hail the Resurrection morning ! While the
gorse's burning mouth
Loads the air with all the fragrance of a long
forgotten south.

What is that to you and me then, Christ is judged
and Christ condemned ?

Pilate only leaps to value when the passion-flood
is stemmed.

What to us the Passion story, Christ is dying,
Christ is dead,

If we are not daily dying in His everlasting
stead ?

What effects the Crucifixion, if we be not
crucified

Man for Godhead, hourly dying, that He may be
glorified ?

Where the Resurrection value if we do not learn
to rise

Daily, hourly, to the freedom that is our supernal
prize ?

ABBOTSHAM.

CHRISTMAS

FAR away from the hollied churches,
Here where the wind is keen and wild
Under the delicate silver birches
Feast we the Birth of the Holy Child.

We are the Father and we the Mother,
We the Mages who offer gold ;
(How shall we ask or desire another
Sign than the symbol the churches hold ?)

The gifts of them from the East are given
Now, by us, when we offer praise
Of consecration, when we have striven
With depth and darkness of winter days.

Thou art born of our great desiring,
Child of Light, in our inmost part :
Child of Love and a faith untiring
Thou dost live in the heart of heart.

Born of death and a great surrender
We thy Father and Mother are :
We in the depth of the year engender
Light to enlighten the days afar.

Here in the joy of a new creation,
Saved by Thee from a world of wrong,
Feast we the Feast of the Incarnation
Here where the light of the sun is strong.

ST. LAWRENCE.

* * *

CALM eyes that know not fear
Look into space,
Unflinching eyes and clear
That light the face.

A broad brow slightly drawn
By lines of pain,
A sudden flash of scorn
That dies again.

A touch of weariness
About the lips,
A shade of dreariness
The eyes eclipse.

A straight firm mouth whose breath
Is inward curled—
I see the face of Death
Watching the world.

LAUFFENMÜHLE.

FACTS

THE wood is quiet to-day—
No wind has stirred
The magic silence of the trees,
Nor any bird
That sings his life away.

Stillness is made complete
By her own peace,
And lays her mantle on the world.
I, sole, release
The sound no things repeat.

Before, beside, behind,
The trees are ranged
In infinite dim labyrinths :
The ways are changed
Each step I take to find

The secret vantage-place.
There is, I know,
Some one point which is everywhere,
Which found would show
The way my steps efface.

These shades where no grass grows
Nor any green,
Dim shadowy groves where all is faint
And there is seen
No light, and no wind blows ;

And these dells gold with light,
Where every leaf
And bud is palpitant with life,
Where is no grief
Or shadow of the night :

All these, if I could find
That point, would range
Themselves in one glad avenue :
The Path would change
And clear. But I am blind. . . .

Far down that shining glade
A temple stands,
Where flames the Truth's Apocalypse.
He who demands
And who is not afraid

Shall see. And so I stray,
And seek to learn
Which tree may guide me to the spot
Where I may turn
And see the open way.

BELFORT.

A TRIPTYCH

I

OH the joy of the fields and the sky!
Of clouds blown high
In the van of a clean strong wind !
Of open spaces
And splendid places
Where ever the great storms find
New force for the war
On the slaves of law . . .
Oh the joy of the driving rain
When it shrieks and stings,
And the black sky flings
White floods on the cringing plain !
There is joy on the heights
When Rebellion lights
His flame-dusk torch of war ;
There is clamour and song
And an end of wrong,
An end to the bond of Law.

Come up, come up to the hills and see
How the waves laugh loud in the sun,
And the great tides turn and the great seas
run . . .

Come up to the hills and see,
Where the winds are strong and the winds are
free
And the clouds are racing by . . .
Ah . . . the fields and the sky !

2

Peace to your words, an iron law
Binds, by the grace of God,
Both you and all the hills you saw
And all the grass you trod.

No man avoids, no bird escapes,
Fly he to Heaven's gate,
The immemorial law that shapes
The ends foreseen of Fate.

No schoolboy rebel on the hills
Is free (praise be to Christ !),
But all he thinks and all he wills
To law is sacrificed.

The seas are bound with cosmic chains,
The stars are still with awe,
No vagrant meteor disdains
The bondage of the law.

Life lays a track no man forsakes
 However great the cost,
Freedom a dream whereof God makes
 A monstrous holocaust.

The law that shapes the gnat's small flight
 Unswervingly controls
All men and things. Hail to the might
 That over-rules our souls !

3

All things are bound and all things, too, are free.
 Their freedom's boundary is set around
Where none suspects its wide authority . . .
 All things are free and all things, too, are
 bound.

All prayers of man and all his murmurings,
 All words and thoughts and actions freely move
Within the circle of the doom of things,
 The final limitation set by Love.

No thing is wholly free, nor any thing
 Tied by the letter of the word of law :
Unknown the carol that the lark shall sing,
 Yet known the issue of the cosmic war.

Bound liberty and free necessity,
Man's freedom limited by God's decree,
The finite perfect by infinity . . .
All things are bound and all things, too, are
free.

BOOKHAM.

THE MAN AND THE WOMAN

THE MAN

I SEARCHED for God in field and town,
And nearly tracked His footsteps down
One time when all the east was bright
With moonbeams silvering the night—
But ever He escaped from me
As I pursued Him wearily.

And once within a dripping wood
With cool rain splashing where I stood,
And out beyond the fearful sea
Was mad with rage and misery . . .
But ever He escaped from me
As I pursued Him ceaselessly.

And in a place where Mass was sung
And altar lights with incense hung,
Where chanting voices rose and sought
To reach the Infinite, I thought . . .
But ever He escaped from me
As I pursued Him fearfully.

In endless words of endless books
I sought, where fancy turns and looks,
Or reason offers signs to lead
To Him who is my only need.
 But ever He escaped from me
 As I pursued Him anxiously.

THE WOMAN

I scarcely knew I looked for God,
Or even that a Path was trod
By His dear soul or by mine own.
I thought my lover touched the throne . . .
 But He has come and taken me
 His own, for ever, utterly.

I made no search of books or men
Or solemn place in moor or glen,
But what I did, I did for love
Of Him who was so far above.
 And He has come and taken me
 His own, for ever, utterly.

ST. LAWRENCE.

ANY MAN TO ANY GOD

OPEN the rushing channels of Thy Word
And fill my veins with Thy great potency,
That all life shudder with expectancy
Of awful messages that Thou hast stirred—
Let them be heard, O God, let them be heard !

Not mine the message, but all mine the pain,
The labour and the travailing of birth,
The bitterness of too reluctant earth
To greet the children of my servient brain—
Let them attain, O God, let them attain !

But if it be that all my strength is weak,
Or if Thou hast no gospel for my lips
And wilt not grant some great Apocalypse
By my small voice, to any souls that seek,
Let others speak, O God, let others speak,

And let me hear the thunder of Thy voice !
Be riven with the lightning of Thy face !
Let me be fired by Thy exceeding grace
And blinded by the wisdom of Thy choice,
That I rejoice, O God, that I rejoice !

ST. LAWRENCE.

THE SECRET IN THE SKY

I SOMETIMES think this pageant of the skies
Must be a canvas where the hand of God
Writes large the Secret hidden from the wise,
And blazons it in daily period.

This wealth of gold, that far horizon lit
By magic flamings—that unheard-of light
That floods the mountains—can the sense of it
Be nothing more than heralding the night?

Its changes have a strange similitude ;
The words are many, but the message one :
The paths to Heaven are a multitude
Till they show sameness when the Work is done.

The pious beggar muttering mystic runes,
The thin-lipped priest when he is celebrant
Of the smoke-hung Mass—the ascetic as he
 swoons
Entranced in Deity—the postulant

Of all great mysteries—yes, even those
With raucous voices bawling out their hymns
In tinny chapels—would they each disclose
Some other wonder than the sunset limns?

Man's modes are many, but his common aim
Is Godhead and the mystery of Light :
Stands daily all the Secret writ in flame
Till one of him shall learn to spell it right ?

ASSISI.

THE VIGIL OF ST. JOSEPH,
ASSISI ¹

I WAIT their coming, while the misty plain
Is decked with silver veiling, as a bride.
Faint birds of evening venture their refrain
Perched low in rustling olive trees that hide
Their hesitant throat, and over them is flung
This gauze of argent with soft fleeces hung.

The slow white oxen move with heavy tread,
Turning the green to brown, the falling light
Pours silver in the barren river bed
Which tortuously winds in ashen white.
I wait their coming, and the while I wait
The question wakes again, importunate.

How long this waiting—will there never burst
The splendid vision on mine aching eyes ?
Shall I for ever have this desert thirst
For founts of wisdom that shall never rise ?
Shall I plod daily on the sandy road
And earn no little easing of the load ?

¹ On the eve of the feast of St. Joseph the peasants in the plain of Spoleto light bonfires near each of the farms.

Shall my soul never feel the healing flame
Burning the dross away, and laving me
With tongues of life—shall my lips never frame
The hymn my spirit chants eternally?
—The wind moans hopelessly across the plain,
A far light flickers up, and dies again.

Oh Far Immensity that men call God,
Whether indeed Thou art a part of me
Or in some other wise, put period
To this my longing—let the guerdon be
Some surer knowledge, some more certain sign
That Thou indeed art here, and I am Thine.

A light—and then another. Ah, again
Gleaming far out upon the purple hill—
Another and another—all the plain
Studded with specks of fire, and further still
Like beacons in the blackness of the night
Spring points of hope like orange stars of light.

Here close beneath—ah mercy, how it burns—
Long yellow tongues and blinding clouds of smoke:
Each cleansing flame sharp crackling as it turns
About the wood, and over all the cloak
Of leaden night. . . . Is God within the flare?
Does Godhead answer in the bell-rent air?

BROTHER FELIX

BROTHER FELIX, BEING OFFERED PREFERMENT,
ANSWERS :

“**N**O, no—for me the cloisters, you may take
The outside glitter of the toys that break,
Give me the green deep-shaded plot of ground
With silent arches simply built around,
The solemn cypresses that point to God,
The white narcissus blooms that break the
sod.

Leave me to draw the water from the well
Among the tree trunks—let me hear the bell
That peals to honour of Our Lady, rings
To hourly worship, while the small bird sings
His intimate sweet carol to the Lord
Who gave him life. Ah, not for me the
sword

Which rules outside the shelter of my walls ;
I gladlier hear the water as it falls
From these black cypress plumes. I rather
wait

The sun's slow entry through the wicket-gate
Than purple pomp of kings. I hold more
dear

The distant murmur of the river here

'Mid these soft Umbrian hills, each olive clad,
Tree-fringed against the sky, than all the sad
World music of beyond.

Leave me my peace :
Your splendours pall with knowledge, mine
increase."

IN THE CLOISTERS OF THE BASILICA
OF SAINT FRANCIS, ASSISI.

DEDICATION

WHAT joy have I in pageants or what part ?
Even though Art
May flaunt her gaudiest banners through the
sky,
And laughing Fantasy
Crown Life and Death with diadems of gold,
I am not overbold
To make rash soilure of her garment's hem.
For that is left to them
Whose eyes are dazzled by her blazonries
And by her masonries
Whose tongue is tied. For in my heart I said,
"All things are dead
Whose life is not in Thee, from Thee, to Thee."
And must I flee
Down echoing vaultings of the running years
Shaken with perilous fears,
Lest I may turn again and halt and say,
"Thine was the way,
Oh Mistress I have loved and yet have left ?"
But I am not bereft
Of hope and flowers and loving and the sun.
The day is not begun
With sunset splendours in the seer's eyes,
Nor do there rise

Heaven's pinnacles before the neophyte,
Though he have might
Of dim foreknowledge of his journey's end,
And God extend
Strong arms to help his weakness and his strength.

Along the fearful length
Of roads dust-trodden by men's hastening
I go toward the King.
—What part have I in pomp and pageanting?

BOOKHAM.

SORROW

“Sorrow is sent for strengthening,” they
said,
And I, “Shall I live when my dreams are dead ?
Can any strength come out of bitterness ?
There is no harvesting where hope is fled.”

For I was ignorant of Sorrow's ways
And spoke much blasphemy in her dispraise ;
“When lilies shall be born of carrion
And all the nights be brighter than the days,
When all the waves of all the seas are still
Then good may come from evil ; but until—”
But Sorrow touched my forehead, saying “Come,
You cannot know before you do my will.”

For many days I followed where she led,
And saw that hope and sorrowing are wed,
That strength is truly child of suffering,
And suffering by strength is comforted.

She taught me that by her men may attain,
And even I was joined to Sorrow's train :
“Sorrow is sent for strengthening,” I said,
“The way of progress is the way of pain.”

TREASURE

ALL you that beat with unavailing hands
On the blind gate of Heaven,
All you that hurl reiterant demands,
Know you the treasure given
Into your hands ?

Poor hands that grope and dear eyes bright with
pain,
Lips twisted in despair,
You importune the pitiful gods in vain,
For they have given their
Treasure of pain.

There is much weeping in the courts of Heaven,
Much revelling in Hell :
Not all the angelic chantings of the seven
Choirs can avail to quell
Weeping in Heaven

When you disdain the sacrament of grief.
No thousand empty days
Voided of sorrow and of joy's relief
Can offer God the praise
Of one day's grief.

Offer, dear hands, your splendid sacrifice,
Make offering of pain ;
Shall any words of any men suffice
To soil, or God disdain,
Your sacrifice ?

BOOKHAM.

NON NOBIS

NOT when the flowers of hope are dead
And all our earth is black and bound with frost,
Not when the harvest time is sped
And autumn leaves on mournful winds are tossed :
But when the summer flowers are strong,
And great white lilies falter in the sun
For very passion, while the song
Of all things living sounds in unison,
Shall we turn back and cry :
“ To Thee who gavest all, we make
Offering for Thy Glory’s sake,
God of Eternity ! ”

Not when the human things are shown
To be the brittle fancies of a dream,
Nor when man’s littleness is known
Behind his pageant of the things that seem :
But when the tide of life runs high,
And every hour is full of splendid things
That run glad riot, and the sky
Is small to hold the rushing of their wings,
Shall we turn back and cry :
“ Non nobis, Domine—to Thee
The glory and the passion be,
God of Eternity ! ”

WORSHIP

I BUILD the palace of my Lord the King
Wherein Life makes her crimson offering,
 With rite of consecration and long praise.
 With weight of prayer and length of many
 days
She makes her sacrament of suffering.

The music of meet words and magical,
That rise as incense and as incense fall
 Fills all the palace of my Lord the King.
 The House is dim with voices murmuring
The sacred burden of their ritual.

.

If, after many suns have come and gone,
The light of some apocalyptic Dawn
 Shall flame with splendour in a crimson sky,
 Grant, Dweller in the Shrine, that even I
May hear the Voice, and see Thy veil withdrawn !

BOOKHAM.

A SEARCH

AFTER æons of watching and waiting, shall
it ever or ever be
That a Hand shall come out of the Cloud, and
offer the Cup to me?
And if after the cycles of praying we have gained
no hint of the Plan,
Does it matter to you or to me, if the Cup be
given to Man?

In far away fantastic lands,
Where fact and fancy interchange
Their ministries, and nothing stands
Unmoved amid eternal change,
A man sought for the Graal Cup,
Thinking it should be lifted up
Beyond the people's view.

In sombre forests where the light
Was pale and dim, and lank things grew
Faintly beneath eternal night,
Where dreams were many and prayers few,

A man sought for the Graal Cup,
Thinking it should be lifted up
Away from sun and storm.

In cloistered silences of prayer
And orison of ancient form,
In meadows where the golden air
Was soft, and with the sun was warm,
A man sought for the Graal Cup,
Thinking it should be lifted up
In peace and in the sun.

In torrid deserts of the mind
Where good and evil were as one,
And earth and heaven wholly blind
To all the things of men begun,
A man sought for the Graal Cup,
Thinking it should be lifted up
In the unstirring void.

Within the pillared halls of gain
With small futilities employed,
In patient ministry to pain
Whose knowledge no man can avoid,
A man sought for the Graal Cup,
Thinking it should be lifted up
In man's activity.

Then, as the Quest was fain to cease
Through famine in the House of Art,
When there was neither joy nor peace
And God was as a thing apart,
The man who sought the Graal Cup
Found it was daily lifted up
In his own heart.

BOOKHAM.

IMMANENCE

WHERE the seas thunder and the white
waves' rage

Shatters the lives of men, as with a rod
Man threshing corn fulfils his heritage,
There, in the toil and tumult, find you God.

Where the lone heath is heavy with distress
Of too great heat, or the moon, silver-shod,
Peoples with shadows all its wilderness,
There, in the peace and stillness, find you God.

In the still splendour of the diamond stars,
Or where the depths of snowy lands untrod
Chant their white hymns, or sudden nenuphars
Fleck the dull sheen of waters, find you God.

Where in lost groves or 'neath their pall of sand
Desolate temples wail their Ichabod ;
Where immemorial tropic-trees are fanned
By murmurous poison winds, there find you
God.

But where men live, and where men love or hate,
Where good is sought, or men's souls are enticed
To depths of infamy inordinate,
Wherever man shall be, there find you Christ.

IMMACULATA ET BEATA !

IMMACULATA ET BEATA ! Lover of the
Splendid Soul,
Somewhere in the depths of glory where the tears
of passion roll
As a sacrament of living, we shall meet and we
shall be
One for longer than for ever, in a formless ecstasy.

Princes of a new creation, Cæsars of a splendid
world,
Born of pain and great rejoicing, through the
night of sorrow hurled
We shall touch the things immortal, more than
pleasure or than pain,
Claim the good and leave the other, winnowing
the splendid grain.

We shall touch the heights of longing, as the fury
of the sea
Flings the billows surging upward in tempestuous
mastery.
All the pæans of the peoples ringing down the
halls of Time
Sound us in our exaltation prothalamions sublime.

Past the furthest thought of living, in the very
grip of life,
Past the knowledge of forgetting, past the memory
of strife,
Further than the realms of longing, past the
boundary of dole,
IMMACULATA ET BEATA ! Lover of the Splendid
Soul !

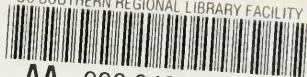
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